

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method of pre-soaking a previously formed non-edible collagen casing for foodstuffs following extrusion and drying and thereby reinforcing the clip strength and cooking resistance thereof comprising treating a said previously formed non-edible dried collagen casing in the absence of a foodstuff with an aqueous solution of at least one salt selected from the group consisting of sodium bicarbonate, sodium sulphate, ammonium chloride, calcium chloride, sodium hydrogen phosphate, potassium hydrogen phosphate, potassium chloride, and ammonium sulphate wherein the total salt concentration in said aqueous solution is in the range of 5-18% by weight.

Claim 2. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the total salt concentration in said aqueous solution is in the range of 8-12% by weight.

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the aqueous solution contains at least two salts.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein the pre-soaked non-edible collagen casing is further packed in a barrier packing material.

Claim 5. (Previously Presented) A non-edible dried collagen casing, which is obtainable by means of the method according to claim 1.

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein said aqueous solution additionally includes sodium chloride.

Claim 7. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 6, wherein the total salt concentration in said aqueous solution is in the range of 8-12% by weight.

Claim 8. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the aqueous solution contains at least two salts.

Claim 9. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 6, wherein the aqueous solution contains at least two salts in addition to sodium chloride.

Claim 10. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the pre-soaked non-edible collagen casing is further packed in a barrier packing material.

Claim 11. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 3, wherein the pre-soaked non-edible collagen casing is further packed in a barrier packing material.

Claim 12. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 6, wherein the pre-soaked non-edible collagen casing is further packed in a barrier packing material.

Claim 13. (Previously Presented) A pre-soaked, reinforced non-edible collagen casing, which is obtainable by means of the method according to claim 2.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) A pre-soaked, reinforced non-edible collagen casing, which is obtainable by means of the method according to claim 3.

Claim 15. (Previously Presented) A pre-soaked, reinforced non-edible collagen casing, which is obtainable by means of the method according to claim 4.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented) A pre-soaked, reinforced non-edible collagen casing, which is obtainable by means of the method according to claim 6.